HARAMBEE NEWS

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IN TRIBUTE TO A SPECIAL WOMAN

There seems to be no trial more bitter than that faced by the loving woman of an imprisoned man. The shame of his crime and the stigma of prison falls upon her innocent shoulders even more than his; for, in a lot of cases, she must meet the "I told you so"s of society.

Tormented by would-be friends, talked about by society as a whole, she wages a brave fight to preserve her dignity for the man she loves. Certainly there is no greater test for her love than this! It is the cruelty of others that causes most of her anguish. In many cases her own family attempts to dissuade her from the path of love toward her man.

Every day she faces more and more criticism from hypocritical men and women alike. But she goes on, waiting bravely for the man she loves. The bitterness of her struggle is never fully known, not even to the man for whom it is waged. She remains silent, as only the most loyal woman knows how to do.

She is a worthy inspiration to the man behind bars. It is her faith and confidence in him that often gives back to the world a decent man. It is her honesty and loyal efforts that make him realize he has a debt to pay... a debt far greater than that which he owes society.... his debt to her, a debt which can't ever be paid back in full, but a debt which inspires him to much greater efforts for her and their future happiness.

She is a woman whom the outside world does not give much credit. For most people do not understand the love by which she is united to her man. A woman such as I have described is a queen among women, and the world would do well to sit up and take notice. To find such a woman is to find a rare jewel, one to be placed upon a pedestal and worshipped. And I thank God that I have found this woman.

-Muhammad Moore

FROM ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE

For a woman to take a genuine interest in an imprisoned man, for her to love him is a remarkable thing. And it is understandable that an imprisoned man so loved should treasure that love and the woman giving it. But the matter of love between a woman and an imprisoned man raises another issue, one that we would be well advised to examine. How can this love be instrumental in keeping the man from returning to prison once he has been released?

In American society today, men seem to be driven by three main stimuli: money, prestige, and sex. For Black men, access to these first two items is severely limited due to the obstacle of institutional racism. And since we tend to measure manhood in terms of money, prestige, and sex; Black men are experiencing an awfully hard time trying to establish our manhood, except insofar as sex is concerned. But even this has become complicated because the commercial media, in its on-going drive to push products on consumers, has, along with other factors, set up in our minds the idea that sex and/or love relationships require some kind of economic achievement in order to be obtained.

As boys, we frequently pulled crazy stunts in order to impress/get over with the girls. Sometimes we bloodied noses or got ours bloodied to show the girls how tough we were. As we became men, we found that these same old stunts were frequently inappropriate, ineffective. EBONY magazine periodically runs a feature on Black eligible bachelors. Are any of these men ever less than economically upper-middle-class? No, the old stunts don't work. And when we go out to "catch," we go out in our baddest rags and with a big roll in the pocket. But of course these bad rags and big rolls, like our parents used to tell us, (continued on page 3)

LARSEN & CO. COOK FOR CONS

On Sunday afternoon, November 25th., prisoners gathered in the gym to hear some jazz. What followed was an exciting session that consistently kept feet tapping and heads nodding in rigorous approval. The musicians, Tom Larsen(keyboards), Ted Larsen(sax), Andy Hall(bass), and Jeffrey Johnson(drums), seemed to feed off the response of the audience, bringing the mix of their talents to a boil of improvisation. While Tom and Ted swung back and forth between melody and weaving in and around chord progressions, Andy and Jeff played the part of mad grammarians, pumping out puncuations to give hot spice to rhythmic statements.

For their last couple of numbers, the group called upon the services of Jack Coleman, our resident-premiere saxophonist, to assist them in cooking. Jack played both sax and flute and blended well, adding an effervescent foam to an already heady brew. On the final number, a piece by Sonny Rollins, Larsen & Co. alternately moved from funk to Latin rhythms, establishing a very appropriate setting by which each musician could get his stuff off. It was during this piece that the drummer put his skill and imagination on full display, deftly toying with rhythm as an artful demon in full control of his craft. To bring the piece to a close, Ted Larson and Jack Coleman dueled back and forth, cutting each other with four-bar riffs, finally joining each other in a raucous and climactic ending.

It was a mean session. And the Harambee Afro-Cultural Organization wishes to thank Keith Heckman of the Lincoln Musicians Association for helping us make this presentation possible and Tom Larsen & Co. for coming out.

-the editor

ON OUR CONDITION

"But we are not anti-American. We are anti or against what America is doing wrong in other parts of the world as well as here. And what she did in the congo is wrong. It's criminal, criminal. And what she did to the American public to get the American public to go along with it is criminal. She's causing American soldiers to be murdered every day, killed every day, for no reason at all. That's wrong. Now, you're not supposed to be so blind with patriotism that you can't face reality. Wrong is wrong, no matter who does or says it."

These beautiful and very inspiring words are just as relevant today as they were yesterday. Bilalians(Blacks) must come to know, understand, and efface the ignominy that American leadership fecundates into the world society. Bilalians must not become isolated. We must look objectively at America's position and displacement relative to the world situation.

It would belittle me to present at this time a historical retrospect of the Bilalian experience in America, knowing that we are even today simply slaves supplanted in the protracted straits of an intemperate society. From within the heart of America we can understand and explain the American phenomenon correctly and accurately. We must realize that it is meaningless to us if America is not considered in connection with the conditions surrounding it, the conditions of the economically, physically, morally, and spiritually deprived peoples of the late, great planet earth.

-Amir

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EXCERPTS FROM "THE DOUBLE BIND"

(The following are excerpts from "The Double Bind," an article written by Joyce DeVillez who is serving time at the Indiana Women's Prison. This article appeared in the July-August edition of Fortune News and is being printed here because this woman's observations and analysis pose questions which some of us would prefer to ignore. -the editor)

"Insecurity and society's dictates of the married couple system force women to make irrational decisions when choosing husbands. While taught that getting married is the proper or normal thing to do, and that they need someone to protect and care for them, women occasionally have a rude awakening when they are forced to live in unbearable conditions with husbands who in some cases keep them prisoners. Others find that their 'Protectors' are instead their greatest source of danger. There is a pervasive tone in which women want to leave the homes of their parents but not to live alone, as if they fear making a go of it on their own. Most of these women married at very young ages; two were married at the age of fifteen. I have talked extensively with several women, and this woman's quote is typical: 'I had never worked, never figured I could get a job, I guess. And I was pregnant.' Instilled with the principles of our society, that women's ultimate goal is marriage, we might compare offering marriage to a girl with offering a highschool boy a position as an executive in a large firm. No child, however, is capable of making decisions which will affect the remainder of her life.....

"Firm discipline, restrictiveness, and harsh punishment by the husband and father constitute a general attitude of resentment and rejection. Several women described themselves as prisoners-without freedoms-and others went so far as to say their marriages were nothing short of life sentences from which they tried in vain to escape. Husbands refused to let their wives go, and threatened to search until they found them if they left; the threats always included the women's death upon their eventually being found: Surely these women were as imprisoned as if they resided in an institution.....

"Few women were free to get a divorce. Their husbands saw their wives and children as their own persoanl property, and many husbands were all too willing to use the threat of death as leverage in keeping their wives with them.....

"Rather than living in harmony, as expected when we married, we lived with threats. We were forced into extreme subordinate roles. Husbands expected compliance from their wives and children, even when there was overt conflict. Wives and children lived in fear for their own lives, and the lives of the members of their families, because of an attacking adult who was seeking relief from his uncontrollable anger and stress.....

"Knowledge derived from talking with women at the Indiana Women's Prison forces us to experience the truth about what a society does to women. Is there, in some of these women's lives, a legal, moral decision to be made? Should anyone be imprisoned in a marriage where she is tortured all her life-with no hope of escape- only to be placed in another prison when she makes the only decision left to her? Violence is a personal necessity for the oppressed and battered wife. When life consists of humiliation, one's only rescue is through rebellion. It is not a strategy consciously devised, but is the deep, instinctive expression of a human being who is being denied individuality."

FROM ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE

don't grow on trees. And most Black men have neither jobs that place us in "eligible" category nor prospects of getting such jobs. So some of us burglarize or rob or peddle drugs or pimp our women to obtain the things we think we need in order to "get over with the hos." And the same system that has designed and maintains this situation puts us in the pen. We do our time, leave, and return, again and again. (continued on page 4)

Mashairi funguwani/Poets: open the riddle

LOOKING GLASS

an embryo g r o w i n g
i am.

unfamiliar to the womb
and flesh that surrounds
a child.

this is a rebirth
of a mind.

seedling masked in disguise
Blossomed with sunshine
and perfected new HIGHS.

-jaha(Deresa Oliver)

FROM ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE

And so how does love play a part in this scheme? Since so much of what we men do is influenced by whether we think a woman (or women) will be impressed, the love of a woman for an imprisoned man should mean that she re-educate herself(if necessary) and her man and help him to learn that his manhood is determined by the quality of character and not by how much money or status he may achieve in his life, that he has worth in his own right. This love should mean that the woman help her imprisoned man develop sufficient concern for their relationship and a sufficiently healthy esteem for himself that he will, upon release, not be willing to risk his life or their life together by taking an illegal route toward meaningless baubles that have no bearing on his/their survival needs.

More generally, Sisters must begin taking advantage of the influence they have on Brothers and help to establish in our communities a new set of values. They must begin to make it clear that, while they may be impressed by a Brother's ability to support himself, they are in no way impressed by pimping, theft, drug-peddling, informing for the police, or any other activity that is harmful to the interests of Black people. Such would be the greatest love. -the editor

CHICAGO IV

Here our lives are
reduced to
statistics
and they are grim
living reflections
of society's rejection
living reflections
of democracy's imperfection
reflections splintered
in the broken glass of our lives
reflected in the eyes
wise eyes of children
mouthing mass
for bread and loot
reflected in the eyes
sad eyes of mothers
fighting the streets
and losing their children
too soon to the streets
mean streets
claiming the lives
reduced
to grim
statistics....
Chicago is a steel
and concrete erection
and our lives
like lost seeds
splattered by
society's rejection.

-Inua Alameen

Jaha(Deresa Oliver) is a student at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln and a member of the African People's Organization.

Inua Alameen lives and works in Chicago and has had a number of her poems published in several literary journals.

The ex-shah of Iran is a criminal living in Texas. None of his poems appear here.